

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ARGENTINE ANT IN THE
UNITED STATES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS
CONTROL OR ERADICATIONBy M. R. SMITH, *associate entomologist, Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine*¹**WILLIAM L. BROWN**

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INTRODUCTION

Sometime previous to 1891 there entered the United States at New Orleans, La., a South American ant which was destined in less than 50 years to spread over not only a large part of the Southern States but a considerable area in California, as well as small areas in several other widely removed States. Within these limits the Argentine ant, *Iridomyrmex humilis* (Mayr), as it is called, has proved to be probably the most annoying of the economic ants and a pest of no little importance. Although especially obnoxious to housekeepers, hotel managers, and cafe owners, it also causes serious losses to orchardists, planters, beekeepers, and others.

According to Newell (10),² Edward Foster, of New Orleans, was the first person to observe this ant in the United States. From Foster's observations (3) it appears likely that the Argentine ant

¹ The work described in this circular was under the general direction of S. A. Rohwer. The scouting and the evaluation of the Mississippi method of control and eradication were under the supervision of the author. The scouting was done by T. F. McGehee, L. C. Murphree, H. T. Vanderford, and D. E. Read. The States scouted by these men were as follows: Alabama, Mississippi, Arizona, New Mexico, Illinois (Murphree); Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia (Vanderford); Louisiana, Oklahoma (McGehee); Florida, South Carolina, Missouri, Arkansas (Read); Texas (Murphree, Vanderford, Read, and McGehee); Kentucky and Tennessee (Vanderford and Murphree). Information on the status of the ant in California was furnished by Harry S. Smith, and in Maryland by E. N. Cory. Officials in entomological, plant quarantine, and extension work in the various States offered many helpful suggestions and aid. The data relative to the work in Mississippi were supplied by Clay Lyle and R. P. Colmer, of the State Plant Board of Mississippi. The photographs were made by Ross E. Hutchins.

² Italic numbers in parentheses refer to Literature Cited, p. 38.

was first carried to New Orleans in coffee ships from Brazil. These ants were first found in California at Ontario in 1905 by E. S. G. Titus. In 1907 they were discovered at Berkeley by J. C. Bradley, and by 1910 C. W. Woodworth, of the University of California, reported that 5,000 acres in that State were infested with this pest. In 1915 Newell and Barber (11) listed 16 localities in California as being infested. Since that time the ants have continued to spread rapidly over new areas in the United States.

As this insect increased in economic importance, many investigations of its biology and control were undertaken. Newell and Barber (11) have published a comprehensive account of the ant's life history and a description of its stages. Work by Horton (8, 9) in the citrus groves of Louisiana and by Woglum and Borden (17) in California deals with this ant in its relation to citrus, and the means of combating it. The development of a satisfactory poison bait by Barber (2) was the culmination of much work along this line by Barber, R. S. Woglum, and A. D. Borden, working for the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture, and Nickels (12), of the Department of Entomology of the University of California. Not only has this bait given satisfactory results wherever it has been used in the South, but Ryan (13) has also indicated its successful use in citrus groves in California. Mississippi was the pioneer State in Argentine ant control and eradication work, regular control campaigns having been organized there as early as 1920.

The act making appropriations to the Bureau of Entomology for the fiscal year 1931-32 provided funds for a further study of the Argentine ant. The work outlined was divided into two parts: (1) To determine the present distribution and relative abundance of the Argentine ant in the United States, and to map the infested areas as accurately as possible within a limited time and at a reasonable expense; and (2) to study the methods used by the State of Mississippi in controlling and eradicating the Argentine ant, and appraise the effectiveness of suppression campaigns conducted by that State.

The survey to determine the distribution and abundance was begun in the fall of 1931 and completed late in the spring of 1933. During this time 4 men scouted for the ants in the principal towns and cities in 18 States. No effort was made to scout rural areas because of the great expense involved and the probability of finding only a small number of infestations. The States scouted most thoroughly were South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana, one or more localities in every county being examined for ants. Scouting was also done in Oklahoma, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Since the status of the ant in California and Mississippi was rather well known, no work was done in California and only a few localities in Mississippi were scouted. The data collected in connection with this survey, which are summarized in this circular, are believed to be adequate for appraising the Argentine-ant situation as it existed in the United States at that time.

During the summer of 1933 the author and L. C. Murphree inspected certain areas in Mississippi believed to have been freed of

Argentine ants as a result of campaigns directed by the State Plant Board. The methods of inspection and those used in the control and eradication work are described in this circular.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE ARGENTINE ANT

Argentine ants are easily confused with other species, and in the course of the surveys native ants that resemble Argentine ants are occasionally encountered. The Argentine ant (fig. 1) can be distinguished from these by the following characteristics: The worker is about one-eighth inch long and of an almost uniformly brown color. It is slender in form and moves rather quickly. The worker possesses a single joint (petiole) between the thorax and the gaster. When several workers are crushed, a characteristic musty or greasy odor (16) is given off. Other native ants either are odorless or they have spicy or pungent odors, or a somewhat sweetish, nauseating odor similar to that given off by *Tapinoma* ants. Some of the ants most closely resembling Argentine ants have the last-named odor.

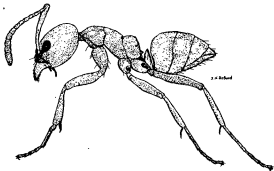


FIGURE 1.—Argentine ant worker. Greatly enlarged.

HABITS AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Although the Argentine ant affects our interests in many ways, it has made itself notorious primarily as a house-infesting insect. In the South this species invades the house almost continuously throughout the year, even in winter when temperatures are as low as 50° F. When a property is heavily infested, the ants may be found not only in pantries, dining rooms (fig. 2), and kitchens, but even in refrigerators, beds, etc. In certain sections dwellings have been vacated because of the ravages of this pest. The presence of the ants in a house cannot be taken as reflection on the neatness of the housekeeper, as many houses kept spotlessly clean are invaded. Late in the summer and especially after heavy rains, perhaps because the honeydew has been washed off the plants outside, the ants become unusually troublesome in the house.

The Argentine ant is practically omnivorous in its feeding habits. If it has any preference for foods, this would seem to be sweets. A scum of dead ants from one-eighth to one-fourth inch deep has been seen in cans containing table sirup. Sugar, jelly, pies, and candies are consumed with relish. The ant will crawl on top of a block of ice to reach meat lying there. Occasionally it feeds even on corn meal.

Outdoors the ants make themselves noticeable by their numbers as well as by the damage they do. In some sections they are so

every cell had been emptied of its honey content by Argentine ant workers.

As far as known, no one has proved that the Argentine ant transmits human diseases. The workers' habit of visiting garbage, refuse, feces, sputum—in fact, anything that might harbor disease germs—suggests that they might easily transmit such diseases as typhoid fever, diarrhea, and tuberculosis. Horton (8) has suggested that the workers may also transmit certain plant diseases through their habit of feeding on the sap flowing from the wounds of plants.

Argentine ants differ from native ants in that, once they have become established on a property, they will usually not tolerate other species. Therefore, instead of many different kinds of ants on a property, there is ordinarily an abundance of only one, the Argentine ant. The author has often witnessed combats in the field between native and Argentine ants. It is not unusual to see five or six Argentine ants attack a single native ant. Although some of the native ants have the advantage in size, or by the possession of a sting, they finally succumb to the attack of these South American invaders because they are outnumbered.

The fact that the Argentine ant destroys practically all the native ants as it advances makes it comparatively easy to delimit an area infested by them. One must not conclude, however, that after Argentine ants are eradicated from an area, that area will be free of native ants also. Just as soon as the Argentine ants begin to disappear, native ants invade the territory, and within a very few years are apparently as plentiful as ever. In Mississippi the fire ant *Solenopsis wyloni* McCook, an arch enemy of the Argentine ant and often mistaken for it, is usually the most abundant native species following the eradication of the Argentine ant.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

MEANS OF SPREAD

The unusually rapid spread of the Argentine ant has been due to its ability to produce prodigious numbers, its habit of exterminating competitive species as it spreads, its lack of natural enemies, its omnivorous feeding habits, and especially to its ability to thrive in human habitations as well as in rural sections.

Its distribution has been accomplished by both artificial and natural means. Artificial spread has been by far the more important. Common carriers and merchandise have transported the ants great distances, thus establishing infestations in localities remote from one another. Along the important railroad lines in the Southern States, especially those in the Gulf coast section leading out of New Orleans, nearly every locality of any commercial importance is the seat of an Argentine ant infestation. Such cities as New Orleans, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Atlanta have served as focal centers for the distribution of the ants in neighboring towns and rural areas. The ants can be carried in shipments of lumber, plants, dry goods, groceries, etc. The spread by means of boats and rafts has not been so great as by railroad, because there is less water transportation, but in areas where water transportation is common,

Argentine ants have been found at altitudes ranging from approximately sea level (3 feet) to as high as 3,955 feet.

So far as could be observed, the ants are capable of living under a great variety of soil conditions. They have been found in soils having textures ranging from light sandy loams to clay loams, with poor to good drainage, and with varying amounts of organic matter, including the soils of the stream bottoms, of the prairies, and of the marshes, as well as those of the uplands.

It was found that certain types of vegetation seem to attract the Argentine ant more than others. The presence of aphids, mealybugs, scale insects, and other honeydew-producing forms is undoubtedly the reason for such preference. Trees that are especially frequented include oaks (chiefly water and live oaks), willow, hackberry, pecan, sweetgum, pine, fig, maple, elm, and citrus.

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Argentine ant infestations have been found in nearly one-third of our States (fig. 6). The total area infested is approximately 4,000 square miles. Practically all the infested areas, with the exception of those in California, are in the Southern States, chiefly in the Gulf coast section. The infestations in Arizona, Missouri, Illinois, and Maryland appear to be isolated, and of these only that in Arizona is typically an outdoor type, as in the other States the ants appear to survive the winter only in buildings, especially those that are heated. In a heavily populated urban area, where the houses are practically contiguous, particularly in northern locations, the ants might spread from house to house until they occupy all or most of the city, because of their ability to survive winter conditions in the interior of buildings.

The Argentine ant has spread more rapidly eastward from New Orleans than it has westward or northward. Except for California and a single infestation in Arizona, it is not found farther west than the eastern half of Texas. In the northern parts of Alabama and Mississippi infested areas are few and small, and in northern Louisiana there are practically none.

Raleigh, N. C., is the most northern locality in the Eastern States where the ant has been found to live outdoors and survive winter temperatures. The infestation here is at least 15 or 16 years old, having been found by the author (14) in September 1919, and as yet it apparently extends only about 0.15 square mile. The slow spread of the ants in Raleigh is an indication that they are very near the northern limit of distribution under outdoor conditions. An outdoor infestation at Nashville, Tenn., found by Barber was exterminated within a year, presumably by severe winter weather. Barber also found the ants at Memphis several years ago, but neither the scouts of the Bureau of Entomology nor representatives of the office of the State entomologist of Tennessee have been able to find any there in recent years.

In Mississippi, however, where there were only about a dozen known infestations in 1910 (Harned and Smith (5)), in 1934 there were at least 245, exclusive of the isolated areas within many of the infested towns. Inspectional work of the State Plant Board of Mississippi has retarded the spread of the ant considerably, and were it not for such service the situation would be much worse.

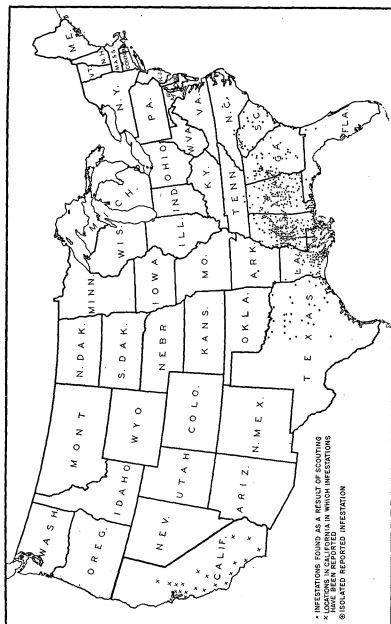


FIGURE 6.—Map of the United States showing Argentine ant infestations.

From what is known of the habits and distribution of the Argentine ant in Mississippi, it is probable that there are isolated rural infestations in many of the States, especially in the Gulf coast region. In Monroe County, Miss., 17 rural infestations are known. Of the known infestations in Mississippi, 26.7 percent are in rural communities.

Unless controlled, it seems likely that the ants will in time be generally, if not continuously, distributed throughout those Southern States in which numerous scattered infestations now occur. In addition they will probably occur in most of the southern half of North Carolina, the extreme southern part of Tennessee, the southern half of Arkansas, the extreme southern part of Oklahoma, the eastern half of Texas, as well as in a large part of California, particularly in the lower altitudes.

OCCURRENCE AND ABUNDANCE IN THE INFESTED STATES

The information on the occurrence of the Argentine ant obtained by scouting or through correspondence is summarized in table 1 and in the following paragraphs. Of the 18 States where scouting was conducted, 13 were found infested.

TABLE 1.—*Status of the Argentine ant in States scouted and in other States where infestations occur*

State	General area scouted	Total counties		Counties scouted		Counties infested		Localities scouted		Localities infested		Area infested Square miles
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Alabama.....	Entire State.....	67	76.1	67	51	76.1	33.3	337	33.3	119	33.3	247,190
Arizona.....	Southern principally.....	14	12.5	8	1	12.5	18	18	7.7	2	7.7	3,420
Arkansas ¹	Eastern and southern.....	75	9.5	21	2	9.5	26	26	0	0	0	32,000,000
California.....	Entire State.....	58	5.9	67	4	5.9	190	190	4	2.1	435	101,846
Florida.....	Entire State except Echols County.....	161	38	160	38	23.7	418	418	58	13.8	101,846	1,000,003
Georgia.....	Southern and along Illinois Central R. R.....	102	1	16	1	0	26	26	1	0	0	921,710
Illinois.....	Northern and western.....	120	64.0	24	0	64.0	575	575	316	54.9	250,000	1,250
Indiana.....	Entire State.....	64	63	64	1	76.8	245	245	1	7.7	017	2,696
Iowa.....	Data supplied by State Plant Board.....	11	0	11	0	0	13	13	0	0	0	13,880
Kentucky.....	Towns near Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.....	13	0	4	0	12.5	82	82	0	0	0	53,190
Louisiana.....	Southwestern.....	36	4	10	5	12.5	21	21	0	0	0	2,696
Maryland.....	Southern, southern, and western.....	77	18	40	0	0	21	21	0	0	0	13,880
Massachusetts.....	Entire State.....	46	46	46	15	32.6	159	159	23	14.4	170	53,190
Michigan.....	Southern and western.....	95	38	38	2	5.2	105	105	2	1.9	0	0
Minnesota.....	Eastern half, few localities in western.....	254	137	137	31	22.6	237	237	38	16.0	0	0
Mississippi.....	Largest cities in southern half.....	100	7	7	0	0	7	7	0	0	0	0
Montana.....	Two of largest cities.....	55	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Nebraska.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Nevada.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
New Mexico.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
North Carolina.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Oklahoma.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
South Carolina.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Tennessee.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Texas ¹.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Virginia.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
West Virginia.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

¹ Texas and Arkansas totals.² Estimated.

ALABAMA

Although the infestations in Alabama are rather generally distributed over the State, they are more numerous in the central part and less prevalent in the northern part (fig. 7). Jefferson County, with 10 infested localities, and Wilcox County, with 7, are the two most heavily infested counties. Many of the infestations are extremely small, indicating that they are recent. The largest infestation is at Birmingham and embraces 124.02 square miles. Montgomery follows with 31.39 square miles, and Mobile third with 10.44 square miles.

Practically all the infestations originated from articles shipped by railroad. A few towns, however, apparently became infested through truck or water shipments. Birmingham is an excellent example of a large commercial city that has become a focal center for the spread of the ants to nearly all the small towns in its vicinity.

ARIZONA

The scouting in Arizona was confined principally to the southern third of the State, but examinations were also made in two localities north of Phoenix, Prescott and Kingman. The localities chosen were the most important commercial points along the main highways and railroad lines. They were as follows: Phoenix (Maricopa County), Mesa, Glendale, Buckeye (Mesa County), Kingman (Mohave County), Nogales (Santa Cruz County), Wellton and Yuma (Yuma County).

The single infestation in the State is at Douglas, in Cochise County.

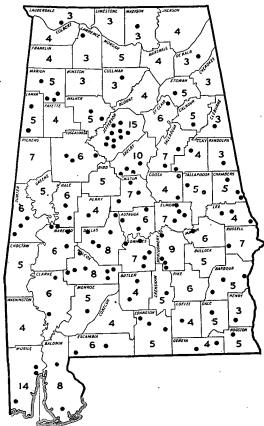


FIGURE 7.—Map of Alabama showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

ARKANSAS

In Arkansas the localities scouted were confined for the most part to the larger and more important railroad junctions or river towns in the eastern and southern sections of the State. The river towns lay along the banks of the White, Arkansas, and Mississippi Rivers. The localities scouted were as follows: Blytheville, Osceola, Wilson (Mississippi County), Marion (Crittenden County), Forrest City (St. Francis County), Marianna (Lee County), Helena and Barton (Phillips County), Clarendon (Monroe County), DeValls Bluff and Des Arc (Prairie County), Searcy (White County), Little Rock (Pulaski County), Benton (Saline County), Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), McGehee and Arkansas City (Desha County), Lake Village (Chicot County), El Dorado (Union County), Camden (Ouachita County), Arkadelphia (Clark County), Malvern (Hot Spring County), Hot Springs (Garland County), De Queen (Sevier County), Ashdown (Little River County), Texarkana (Miller County, Ark., and Bowie County, Tex.).

Of the two infestations found, that at Hot Springs is very small, only 0.04 square mile, while that at Texarkana is rather large, comprising four separate areas which cover a total of 3.38 square miles. Both infestations probably originated from railroad shipments.

Although the eastern and southern sections of the State border on Mississippi and Louisiana, respectively, the lack of infestations in these sections is probably due to the fact that neither northern Louisiana nor northwestern Mississippi is as yet heavily infested.

CALIFORNIA

The distribution of the Argentine ant in California can only be summarized here in a general way, because the Bureau of Entomology did no scouting in this State, nor has the exact distribution been determined by the State authorities. The information given below and on the map (fig. 8) was kindly furnished by Harry S. Smith, of the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, Calif., and represents a summary of reports supplied him by county agricultural commissioners.

The San Francisco Bay district including the Santa Clara Valley and the coastal plain to the south, the San Joaquin Valley south of and including Sacramento County, a considerable part of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, and western San Bernardino, Riverside, and San Diego Counties may be said to be generally infested; that is, colonies of ants were found in every residence and on a considerable portion of the orchard acreage. Dr. Smith is of the opinion that there are at least 2,000 square miles of infested territory in California, and that this area is far greater than in any other State. He says:

The ant has been here for more than 30 years, conditions are ideal for its development, and the unusually extensive distribution of balled ornamentals has seemed to disseminate it very widely.

FLORIDA

In Florida the known infestations are in the northeastern and northwestern sections of the State (fig. 9). As yet none of the infes-

tations is large, that at Pensacola (Escambia County) being the largest, with 3 separate areas totaling 0.20 square mile. Caryville (Washington County) has 0.11 square mile, and Palatka (Putnam County) and Jacksonville (Duval County) 0.06 square mile each. The history of these infestations is rather obscure, but it is probable that boats and railroads played almost equal parts in carrying the ant to this State.

That Florida has so few infestations is surprising in view of the many factors that might aid the ant in becoming established there,

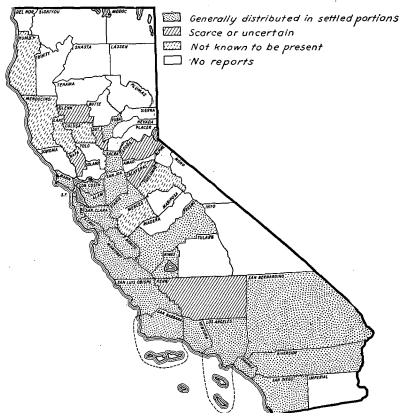


FIGURE 8.—Map of California showing Argentine ant distribution.

such as a semitropical or mild climate, a heavy tourist trade, and opportunities for the ants to come in by both boat and railroad.

GEORGIA

Georgia (fig. 10) is not so generally infested as Alabama, the infestations being confined largely to the northwestern part, especially the area lying between Columbus and Atlanta. The extreme southeastern, southwestern, and northern sections are practically free from infestations. The most heavily infested counties are Coweta, Troup, and Fulton. A large number of these infested areas lie along

the Atlanta and West Point Railroad. Most of the infestations in Georgia, like those in Alabama, without doubt originated from ants infesting products shipped by railroad.

The largest infested area in the State is at Atlanta, comprising 26.70 square miles. The next largest are Newnan, 13.68 square miles; Moreland and St. Charles together, 12.48 square miles; and Augusta, 8.15 square miles. Atlanta, like Birmingham, has been the source of infestation of many of the surrounding small towns.

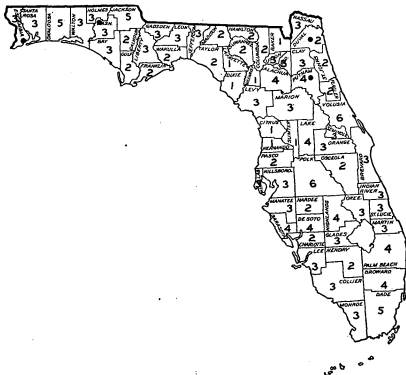


FIGURE 9.—Map of Florida showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

ILLINOIS

In Illinois the following towns were surveyed: Cairo (Alexander County), Champaign and Tolono (Champaign County), Mattoon (Coles County), Neoga (Cumberland County), Arcola and Tuscola (Douglas County), Edgewood and Effingham (Effingham County), Carbondale and De Soto (Jackson County), Vienna (Johnson County), Centralia, Odin, Salem, Alma, and Kinmundy (Marion County), Metropolis (Massac County), DuQuoin and Tamaroa (Perry County), Mounds and Ullin (Pulaski County), Harrisburg (Saline County), Anna (Union County), Ashley (Washington County), and Marion (Williamson County).

No Argentine ants were found as a result of the scouting, but the species is established in the Zoology Building at the University of

Chicago.⁴ This infestation supposedly originated in 1906 from ants introduced on plant material for use in connection with investigations on the Colorado potato beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata* Say). Colonies are located in the basement of the building and occasionally cause considerable annoyance in the laboratories. Although in warm weather the ants are found outdoors a number of feet from the building, they have not spread to other buildings or

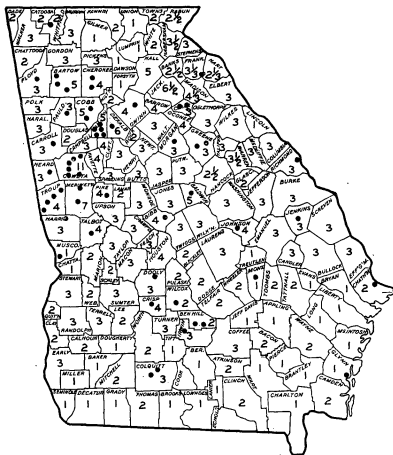


FIGURE 10.—Map of Georgia showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

over the campus. Apparently they are able to survive the winter only indoors.

KENTUCKY

Scouting in Kentucky was confined to the northern parts lying along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and also along the Illinois

⁴ Data on this infestation were supplied by Mary Talbot, of the University of Chicago, and V. E. Shelford, of the University of Illinois.

Central Railroad in the extreme western part of the State. The localities examined were as follows: Wickliffe and East Cairo (Ballard County), Wellsburg (Bracken County), Petersburg (Boone County), Holt (Breckinridge County), Catlettsburg and Ashland (Boyd County), Bardwell (Carlisle County), Carrollton (Carroll County), Weston (Crittenden County), Owensboro (Daviess County), Hickman and Fulton (Fulton County), Warsaw (Gallatin County), Greenup (Greenup County), Clinton and Columbus (Hickman County), Hawesville (Hancock County), Covington (Kenton County), Louisville (Jefferson County), Vanceburg (Lewis County), Smithland (Livingston County), Maysville (Mason County), Paducah (McCracken County), Brandenburg (Meade County), Westport (Oldham County), Henderson (Henderson County), and Uniontown (Union County). No Argentine ants were found. The known infestations nearest to Kentucky are in the extreme southern part of Tennessee.

LOUISIANA

In Louisiana the ant occurs not only in cities and towns, but in rural or sparsely settled areas, and in almost impenetrable swamps. The southern half of the State is not only generally but heavily infested, whereas in the northern part there are only a few widely separated infestations (fig. 11). Although the heavier infestation in the southern half of the State might be attributed to the milder climate and the earlier appearance of the ants, it is probably due largely to spread by floods and boats.

The importance of railroad lines in the dissemination of the ants is clearly shown in Tangipahoa Parish, where 10 of 13 localities along the Illinois Central Railroad were found infested. There are more large infestations in Louisiana than in any other State. Such infestations range from 10 to 35 square miles on an average, and there are several as large as 120 to 135 square miles. Owing to their inaccessibility, many localities, especially in the southern part of the State, were not scouted. The infested area is therefore probably larger than that given in table 1.

MARYLAND

No scouting was carried on by the Bureau of Entomology in Maryland. The author first learned of the occurrence of the Argentine ant in this State when he received from E. N. Cory, State entomologist, specimens collected from the Clifton Park greenhouses in Baltimore. Later investigations by Dr. Cory and members of his staff revealed the presence of this ant in greenhouses at the following parks in Baltimore: Druid Hill, Carroll, Patterson, and Clifton.

On October 7, 1931, the author and D. W. Hookom, of the University of Maryland Department of Entomology, visited greenhouses in both Clifton and Carroll Parks where the Argentine ants were established. At Carroll Park colonies were found nesting outdoors 75 yards from the greenhouse, but at Clifton Park the ants were not more than 10 feet away. Little definite information regarding the history of the infestation could be obtained. Judging from the abundance of the ants at Carroll Park and from statements of green-

house attendants, they undoubtedly have been present there for several years.

As a result of an investigation during the winter of 1931, Mr. Hookom found that the ants lived outdoors in protected places, but the winter was comparatively mild.

MISSISSIPPI

In Mississippi scouting for Argentine ants was confined to 24 localities in the extreme northern part of the State, because the State Plant Board was rather well posted as to the general distribution

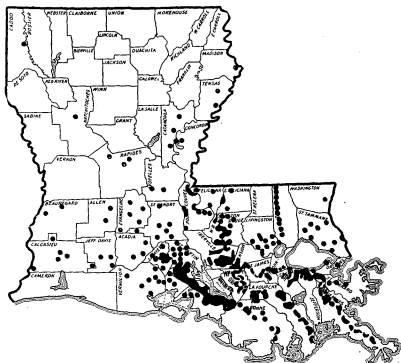


FIGURE 11.—Map of Louisiana showing the infested localities (dots) in each county.

of the ant elsewhere. The summary of conditions in Mississippi is based on records of both the Mississippi State Plant Board and the Federal Bureau of Entomology.

Although the ant is generally distributed throughout the State (fig. 12), it is most abundant in the southern and central sections, and least abundant in the northwestern portion. Railroads have been the principal means of spread. So clearly is this indicated that one can locate the important railroad lines in the State by following on the map the dots representing the infested localities. The most heavily infested counties are Monroe, Hinds, Attala, and Holmes. Many of the infestations are small, but in some of the towns the infestation covers the entire incorporated area and extends into the country for several miles. Those at Jackson, Meridian, and Kosci-

usko undoubtedly cover from 12 to 15 square miles each. In a number of towns there is more than one infested area; at Columbus, for example, 18 isolated infestations have been found. A large number of the infestations, particularly in the heavily infested counties, occur in rural areas, and these no doubt originated through introduction of groceries or other products from neighboring towns.

Recent intensive scouting shows that 39 of the 245 infested localities have been freed of the pest, as a result of poisoning campaigns.

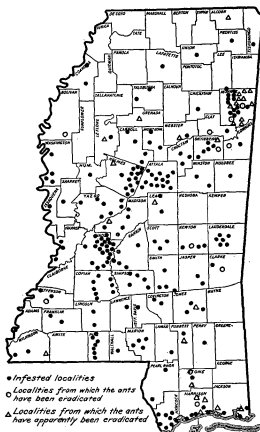


FIGURE 12.—Map of Missouri showing status of Argentine ant infestations.

MISSOURI

The following towns were scouted in Missouri: Poplar Bluff (Butler County), Cape Girardeau and Delta (Cape Girardeau County), Jefferson City (Cole County), Boonville (Cooper County), Washington (Franklin County), Hermann (Gasconade County), Charleston (Mississippi County), New Madrid (New Madrid County), Sedalia (Pettis County), Caruthersville (Pemiscot County), Ste. Genevieve (Ste. Genevieve County), and St. Louis (St. Louis County).

Argentine ants were found in St. Louis, but only at the Missouri Botanical Gardens and in a nursery nearby. From the information obtained it does not seem possible for the ants to survive outdoor winter conditions here.

Within the greenhouses and other heated buildings the ants seem to thrive and are making themselves objectionable through their attendance on aphids and mealybugs. Only two infestations are known to occur farther north than the one in St. Louis, and both of these are also of the indoor type.

NEW MEXICO

The towns scouted in New Mexico lie along the railroad lines and are as follows: Las Cruces, Hatch, Rincon, and Mesilla Park (Dona Ana County), Silver City (Grant County), Lordsburg and Rodeo

(Hidalgo County), and Deming and Cambray (Luna County). Although the scouting was limited, it does not appear likely that the ants occur in this State.

NORTH CAROLINA

In North Carolina the known infestations are confined to the southern and central or east-central sections (fig. 13). None of the infested areas is very large, that at Wilmington, with two areas totaling 1.23 square miles, being the largest and apparently the oldest. The infestation at Goldsboro, covering 0.60 square mile, is



FIGURE 13.—Map of North Carolina showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

next in size, while that at Raleigh is only 0.15 square mile. It is surprising that no infestation was found in the small towns near Wilmington.

OKLAHOMA

The following localities in southern Oklahoma were scouted: Anadarko (Caddo County), Durant (Bryan County), Ardmore (Carter County), Coalgate (Coal County), Lawton (Comanche County), Hugo (Chocktaw County), Clinton (Custer County), Pauls Valley and Lindsay (Garvin County), Chickasha (Grady County), Holdenville (Hughes County), Altus (Jackson County), Mangum (Greer County), Hobart and Snyder (Kiowa County), Madill (Marshall County), Valliant and Idabel (McCurtain County), McAlester (Pittsburg County), Ada (Pontotoc County), and Frederick (Tillman County). That no ants could be found in southern Oklahoma is surprising, since a number of infested localities in northeastern Texas are not more than 50 to 75 miles away. A vigilant watch should be kept for the appearance of the ants in this section of the State.

SOUTH CAROLINA

In South Carolina the ant was found to be fairly well scattered over the State, but was most prevalent in the southeastern, east-central, and northern sections (fig. 14). Spartanburg County, with five infestations, has the largest number; Greenville County second, with four; and Charleston County third, with two.

The largest infestation in the State, and undoubtedly the oldest, is that at Charleston, which was estimated to cover 6.29 square miles.

The next largest infestation is at Spartanburg, which occupies 2.20 square miles, and that at Gaffney third, with 1.12 square miles. In several towns there is more than 1 infestation, Spartanburg having 12 and Greenville and Gaffney 3 each.

The importance of the railroad in distributing the ant is clearly shown in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, where nearly all the infestations lie along the main line of the Southern Railroad. Many of the towns in the vicinity of Charleston, where the ant has been known for at least 19 years, are apparently not infested.

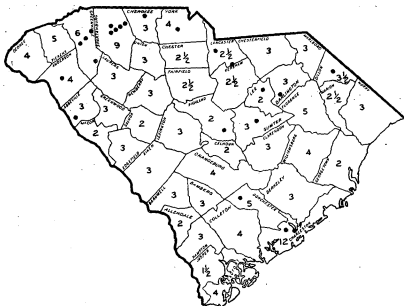


FIGURE 14.—Map of South Carolina showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

TENNESSEE

In the southern part of Tennessee only the larger and more important commercial towns were scouted, and in the western section the work was confined to towns along the main line of the Illinois Central Railroad and the Mississippi River. Infestations were found in the extreme southern part of the State not far from the Alabama line, one at Pulaski in Giles County and another at Fayetteville in Lincoln County. It was surprising that no Argentine ants were found at Memphis or in any of the larger towns along the railroad or river.

TEXAS

The Argentine ant was found to be rather generally distributed over the eastern half of Texas, or that section lying east of Wichita Falls and Austin (fig. 15). This was to be expected in view of its nearness to Louisiana, its rather densely populated areas, and the more abundant vegetation here than in the western part of the State.

The largest infestations in the State are as follows: Beaumont, 11.4 square miles; Fort Worth, 11.37 square miles; Houston, 8.32 square miles; Dallas, 5.07 square miles. In spite of the large number of localities infested in Texas, the State is much less heavily infested than the States east of Louisiana.

Apparently all but a very few of the infestations were started from produce shipped on railroads. The ant has not become established in many of the towns along the Gulf of Mexico, either because large boats do not come into these towns or because the boats are usually not from ports infested with Argentine ants. Frequent direct water

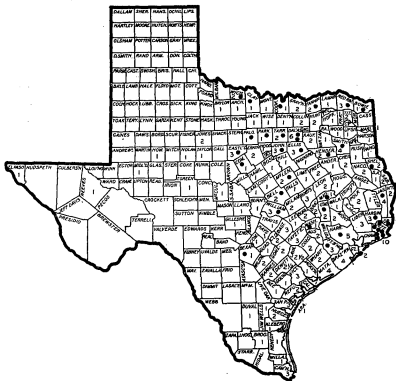


FIGURE 15.—Map of Texas showing number of localities scouted for Argentine ants and the infested localities (dots) in each county.

communication between Louisiana and the southeastern section of Texas would no doubt hasten the establishment of the ants there.

VIRGINIA

The following cities in Virginia were scouted: Lynchburg (Campbell County), Richmond (Henrico County), Petersburg (Dinwiddie County), Suffolk (Nansemond County), Norfolk (Norfolk County), Roanoke (Roanoke County), and Lexington (Rockbridge County). The occurrence of the Argentine ant at Norfolk had been reported in correspondence, but H. T. Vanderford was unable to find any ants after a 5-day search. The limited scouting failed to reveal any ants in the State.

WEST VIRGINIA

Less scouting was done in West Virginia than in any other State. Outdoor infestations so far north did not seem probable, especially since no typical ones had been found north of Raleigh, N. C. In passing through this State to Kentucky, the scouts spent 4 days in Huntington (Cabell County) and Charleston (Kanawha County), with negative results.

CONTROL AND ERADICATION WORK IN MISSISSIPPI

According to Harned (5) Argentine ants probably made their first appearance in Mississippi about the year 1900, and by 1909 there were approximately a dozen known infestations in the State. By 1922 infestations in 40 towns had been recorded, and in 1934, 245 infestations had been found. Since only about half a dozen new infestations had been discovered during the previous year, it was presumed that most of the infested areas in Mississippi had been located.

As the number and severity of the infestations increased, and property owners found that their own efforts to combat the pest with commercial poisons were either futile or at least only temporarily beneficial, they appealed to the State officials for help. By this time E. R. Barber, an investigator for the Federal Bureau of Entomology, had proved that the ants could not only be controlled but practically eradicated in small areas. Control campaigns were therefore inaugurated through a cooperative arrangement between the State Plant Board and the infested communities, with the assistance of Mr. Barber in directing the work. The first of these campaigns were conducted in four towns—Durant, Laurel, Crystal Springs, and Woodville—during the fall of 1920, and they were so successful that others were undertaken in the following years. Since 1920 the plant board has supervised this work, while the municipalities and counties have paid the expenses. This work reached its height in 1929, when 121 localities were poisoned for the ants, 1,136,028 cups of poison being used at a cost of approximately \$35,000. Even in the depression years there has been a steady demand for control work, although the towns and counties have been handicapped by lack of funds.

The early campaigns were designated control campaigns, and the word "eradication" was not used. In 1924, however, an area embracing a block and a half at Fayette, Miss., was freed of the ants after two successive fall campaigns, at an exceedingly low cost (15). So far as is known, this was the first town, not only in Mississippi but in the world, from which the ants had been eradicated. Later other towns began to eradicate the ants, and by 1928 six—Fayette, Shaw, Lyman, Landon, Moss Point, and State College—had been freed of them (4). Since then State authorities have not only stressed the fact that it is possible to eradicate Argentine ants by timely and thorough campaigns repeated for several consecutive years, but they have encouraged the municipalities and counties to fight the ants in this manner.

Since it has been definitely shown that both control and eradication of Argentine ants can be achieved by the method used in Missis-

issippi, it is desirable to describe in detail how this is accomplished and to give some idea as to the cost of the work.

SURVEYING INFESTED AREAS

Usually there is only one general infestation in a town, although in some towns as many as 15 to 20 isolated areas have been found. The ideal method of locating and delimiting infestations would be to scout the entire town, property by property, and block by block, but this is both costly and time-consuming. The plant board has therefore not attempted to scout entire towns with such thoroughness unless the town authorities have indicated their intention of

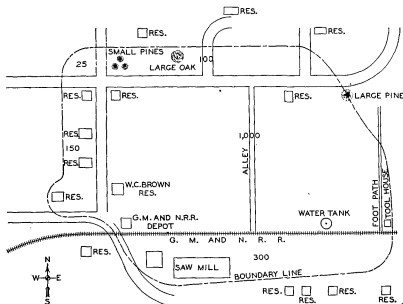


FIGURE 16.—Map of an area infested with Argentine ants, showing the number of cups of poison required for the various blocks.

continuing the work until eradication is accomplished. It is possible, however, to determine the limits of an infested area without visiting every property or block. Since the Argentine ant destroys practically all the native ants, wherever native ants are found one can be reasonably sure that there are no Argentine ants. If the scout, therefore, proceeds from a given point of infestation and examines trees, fences, the ground, and the bases of pillars of buildings, he can consider that he has reached the limit of the infested area when he first encounters native ants instead of Argentine ants. From this point he encircles the infested area and as he finds the division between the infested and the noninfested territory he indicates it on a map (fig. 16). When the circle is completed he is in a position to estimate the cost of poisoning that area.

ESTIMATING THE COST OF A CAMPAIGN

The cost of a campaign is estimated on the basis of the number of cups required. In an ordinary city block this will range from 100 to 200. One familiar with the work can estimate roughly the number needed after walking around the block, but a less experienced person should note the places where cups are needed, spacing them 20 to 25 feet apart, regardless of the character of the block with respect to vegetation, buildings, fences, etc. In areas not bounded by streets the estimate should be made in such a way as to avoid confusion. The number of cups of poison required for each block in the infested area is indicated on the map (fig. 16). The total number of cups required for all the blocks and other areas is then computed. It is advisable to give the totals in even thousands, for manufacturers prefer to ship in such lots.

The cost of supplies and labor for a campaign that will require 6,000 cups is estimated, on the basis of current prices, to be about as follows:

6,000 paperoid cups, at \$9.25 per 1,000.....	\$55.50
6,000 brackets, at \$3.25 per 1,000.....	19.50
75 gallons of poison, at 60 cents per gallon.....	45.00
12 pounds of shingle nails, at 5 cents per pound.....	.60
Incidentals (four 5-gallon kerosene cans, 1 bucket, 1 funnel, 4 hammers, 4 grocery baskets).....	6.00
Express or freight on supplies.....	2.00
Labor, 120 hours at 20 cents per hour.....	24.00
Total.....	152.60
Cost per cup.....	.0254

In Mississippi many campaigns have been put on at an average of from 2.3 to 3 cents per cup. A well-conducted campaign should seldom cost more than 3 cents per cup.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

CUPS

During the course of the control and eradication work in Mississippi three types of poison containers have been used—tin cans, aluminum cups, and paperoid cups (fig. 17).

Tin cans with detachable lids, measuring $2\frac{1}{2}$ by 4 inches with a capacity of approximately 10 fluid ounces, were first used. Two indentations were made at the top with pliers, which when the lids were placed on the cans formed holes through which the ants might pass. To attach a can to a tree, post, or building, a six-penny nail was driven into the object and the can hung over it through one of the holes beneath the lid. Formerly a gill of poison and a piece of sponge about the size of an egg were placed in each can, the sponge serving as a footing for the ants as they fed. It was later found that the sponge was unnecessary and that 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of sirup per can was sufficient.

The tin can was finally discarded because of its high cost. The cost of the early campaigns averaged from 6 to 7.5 cents per can, and from 2.2 to 2.5 cents of this was for the can. The tin can, however, is somewhat more substantial than the other containers and, because

such conditions. The cost of control work prevents most localities from attempting more than one campaign a year. Moreover, such splendid results have been obtained in Mississippi from fall campaigns that there has been no incentive for putting on spring campaigns.

REACTION OF ANTS TO THE POISON

All the cups of poison are not visited at once by the ants. When feeding does take place, the ants visit the poison rather regularly and in large numbers for from 6 weeks to 2 months, after which time they attend it at infrequent intervals and then only in small numbers. Cups placed on trees, fences, and houses are visited most frequently. It has been noticed that when the sirup begins to thicken its palatability for the ants greatly decreases, and within a year it ceases to attract them, although many of the cups are not yet empty. It is generally believed that worker ants and their brood die within a few days after having fed on the poison. The greatest reduction in the number of ants evidently takes place during the first 2 months after the poison has been distributed.

DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CAMPAIGN

In the summer following a campaign a survey is made by plant board inspectors to ascertain its effectiveness. Inquiries are made of housekeepers, storekeepers, cafe owners, and hotel managers as to the situation on their property. This is rated as "good" if no ants have been seen in their buildings since the poisoning, "fair" if few ants have been in evidence, and "poor" if the ants have been as abundant as before the poisoning. The "good" and "fair" reports are considered as satisfactory, the "poor" as unsatisfactory. Following the first campaign in a locality, from 95 to 100 percent of the reports are usually satisfactory, and after successive campaigns have been put on 100 percent of the reports are often satisfactory. In obtaining these reports it is necessary to be cautious, especially near the edge of the infested area, lest the property owner mistake native ants for Argentine ants. Some of the native ants cannot be controlled by this poison.

When the first campaign in a locality has been put on in a thorough manner, the abundance of the ants is usually so greatly reduced that few homes are troubled with them any more and the residents often conclude that they have been eradicated. This is rather unfortunate, for it is difficult for the plant board to induce that locality to put on a follow-up campaign. It is customary for the plant board to publish in the local paper a short account of the investigation, informing the public that, although the ants have been greatly reduced in numbers, they have not been eradicated.

In putting on the second fall campaign, the same quantity of supplies as in the first campaign should be used. The summer after the second campaign the infested area can be scouted to determine what sections have been freed of the ants and to what extent the quantity of supplies can be reduced for the next campaign.

Many towns will poison the ants one fall and then wait until they become annoying again before putting on another campaign.

Such a course is always discouraged by the plant board, as the ants can reach their former numbers and cause serious annoyance within 2 or 3 years.

ERADICATION WORK

The Argentine ant can be controlled by one thorough campaign, but these campaigns must be repeated if eradication is desired. Occasionally two campaigns are sufficient, but usually from three to five, and occasionally more, are necessary. To be successful, however, especial attention must be paid to the timeliness and thoroughness of the work and to the protection of the cups. If eradication has not been achieved after the second campaign, further treatment depends on the abundance of the ants. If they are still widely distributed and fairly abundant, a third general campaign with the same quantities of supplies as before is advisable. If, however, only a few colonies are found in a block, it is sufficient to reposit the infested spots, including an area within a radius of about 50 feet. Fresh poison should be applied immediately and again in the fall. The intensive follow-up scouting should be continued for two summers after the area appears to be free from the ants.

SUPPLEMENTARY MEASURES

Although it has been shown that the ants can be eradicated from given areas by poisoning alone, it is frequently desirable to hasten eradication by supplementary measures such as burning and oiling. In woodland areas where the ants are colonized in stumps, logs, and rotton branches of trees, many strong colonies can be destroyed by making fires in the woods and burning all the movable wood containing colonies. Stumps and immovable logs (fig. 24) can be burned by pouring on kerosene and setting them afire.

The burning should be done when the wood is dry and there is no wind. The best time for this is probably late in the fall or in winter, when the temperature is 50° F. or lower and the ants in their nests are inactive. The fires should be carefully guarded to prevent them from getting out of control and starting woodland fires. With labor in the South ordinarily not costing more than 12.5 cents an hour, and kerosene selling at 14 cents a gallon, the cost of treating is not more than \$2 to \$3 per acre.

Digging colonies out of the soil and burning them with a blowtorch is such a laborious task that it is prohibitive except where the ants have been almost completely exterminated. It is doubtful if it would be practical where there are more than one or two colonies per block. This work requires a higher type of labor than some of the other control work. It sometimes takes half a day or longer to burn out a large colony, which has many ramifying galleries in the soil. As a worker can only burn from one to three colonies a day by this method, the eradication of each colony would cost from \$1.25 to \$4. Waste oil, such as can be obtained from filling stations, is used to saturate the ground where the colony is dug up. From 3 to 4 gallons will saturate the ordinary nest.

The towns that have eradicated Argentine ants in Mississippi have used diverse methods in accomplishing this. In the 21 areas investigated by the Bureau of Entomology, the total cost of eradication per block has varied considerably. Since the adoption of the paper cups,

METHOD RECOMMENDED FOR THE CONTROL OR ERADICATION OF THE ARGENTINE ANT

The first step in the campaign is to delimit the infested area. Scouting for this purpose should be done late in the summer or early in the fall, and never when the temperature is below 65° to 70° F. In connection with the scouting a map of the infested area should be prepared which will not only be accurate, but clear to anyone using it. It should be drawn on such a scale that it can conveniently be used in the field. In addition to indicating the blocks and streets, it will prove helpful to note important landmarks, especially in those sections not represented by streets. The number of cups of poison required for each block can be indicated on the map.

The campaign should be put on in the fall or winter, when there is so little natural food available that the poison will prove attractive to the ants. For the comfort of the men it is best to do this in mild weather.

The poisoned bait recommended is the "standard Government-formula Argentine ant poison", which is a sirup containing sodium arsenite. Before being distributed it should be analyzed by a chemist, and if it does not meet the specifications it should be discarded.

The most satisfactory type of container for the poison is the paper-oid cup. The most practical and economical method of filling the cups is in the field from tanks carried on the backs of the field crew. The cups should be placed from 20 to 25 feet apart, and they should be concealed as much as possible. On trees and posts they should be tacked as high as one can reach. On fences they are preferably placed low and, if the fence encloses domestic animals, outside the enclosure. Under houses that are open underneath, the cups can be put on the top of every third or fourth pillar, and under houses that are enclosed the cups can be fastened on the walls about 20 feet apart and as high as one can reach. Where there are no objects on which to tack the cups, they should be buried in the ground or placed in clumps of grass or bushes.

It is important to select the best type of labor available, as the success of the campaign is largely dependent on the thoroughness of the work. The men should be instructed before the work is begun and carefully supervised throughout the campaign.

On the completion of the campaign, an article should be prepared for a local newspaper explaining the nature of the poison, how it affects the ants, and the results that may be expected. Protection of the cups should be especially urged. An appeal to the children not to touch the cups can be directed through the superintendent of public schools. The aid of the Boy Scouts can also be enlisted.

The following summer the effectiveness of the campaign should be determined by questioning property owners, and the results of this survey published at once in the local paper. Later the margins of the entire infested area should be scouted to ascertain if the ants have spread since the previous fall or if any infested areas have been overlooked. The results of this scouting should be indicated on the same map that was used in the preliminary scouting. If the ants have spread, additional supplies should be included in the estimates for the second fall campaign; if not, the same quantity of supplies

should be ordered. The second campaign should be handled in the same manner as the first.

If eradication is to be attempted, the summer following the second fall campaign a thorough scouting of the entire infested area should be made to determine the exact status of the ants. If the ants are rather generally distributed over the entire area and there are more than one or two colonies per block, the infested area should be repoisoned as in the previous fall. If, however, the ants have been nearly eradicated, it is only necessary to repositon within a radius of 50 feet from each colony located. This should be done immediately and again in the fall.

The following summer, if possible, the entire infested area should be thoroughly scouted. If time or funds do not permit, then those areas where colonies were previously found should be carefully examined. Often the ants have apparently been eradicated by the third summer, but in such a case the area should not be released as free until two additional annual scoutings have failed to disclose any ants.

The use of supplementary measures is often practicable when the abundance of ants has been reduced to a colony or less per block. Such colonies can be dug out and the ants burned with a torch, after which the ground should be well saturated with waste oil. Even at the beginning of the work, in wooded areas it is well to burn out as many colonies as possible by setting fire to logs and stumps and by gathering up all pieces of wood containing the ants and throwing them into a general fire. Every precaution should be taken to guard against forest fires.

SUMMARY

The Argentine ant, *Iridomyrmex humilis* (Mayr), is a pest of no little importance throughout the Southern States and in California. It is especially troublesome as a house-infesting insect, being present almost continuously throughout the year. Out of doors the ants feed on the honeydew produced by scale insects, mealybugs, and aphids, and do indirect damage to vegetation by fostering these insects. The ants also steal seeds from seed beds, kill young poultry and birds in their nests, destroy colonies of honeybees, and feed on the sap or fruit juices from certain trees and plants, particularly citrus.

The wide and rapid spread of this ant since its introduction sometime previous to 1891 has been accomplished chiefly by artificial means, the railroads being the principal means of dispersion. Natural spread is due mainly to crawling, which varies from a few feet to several hundred feet a year, but heavy rains, floods, etc., also play an important role. Flight is a negligible factor in the spread of this ant.

Argentine ants have been found in all types of soil and at elevations ranging from approximately sea level to nearly 4,000 feet. They seem to be affected by strong winds, and by moisture conditions in the soil. Although tropical insects, they can withstand more cold than most of our native ants.

It is estimated that the Argentine ant occurs over an area of at least 4,000 square miles in the United States. California and Louisiana are the most heavily infested States, and infestations also occur in Mis-

Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, South Carolina, Arkansas, North Carolina, Florida, Maryland, Tennessee, Arizona, Missouri, and Illinois (States listed in order of decreasing size of infested area). The size of the infestations varies from a single colony to areas containing several hundred square miles. Although as yet the ants are sporadically distributed over the States mentioned, except in Missouri, Maryland, and Illinois, where the infestations are of the indoor type, there is nothing to prevent them from occupying the entire area within their present boundaries and also from spreading to additional territory.

Efforts to control and eradicate the Argentine ant in Mississippi by poisoning campaigns have resulted in freeing 39 out of 245 infested localities, and reducing the infestations in nearly all the others. The method used in Mississippi is therefore described in some detail in this circular. The ants can be controlled by one thorough campaign, and by repeating the campaign each fall it is possible to eradicate them in from 2 to 5 years. The method consists, in brief, in making careful surveys of infested areas and then placing cups of sirup containing sodium arsenite at proper intervals throughout these areas. Where eradication is attempted, supplementary measures, such as burning and oiling colonies, expedite the work, although these should not be resorted to until the numbers have been greatly reduced. The cost of eradicating ants should not be more than 3 cents per cup of poison, or \$3 to \$6 per block.

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